

The Children in the Wood.

OR THE Norfolk Gentleman's Last Will and Testament.



The father left his little son,
As plainly doth appear,
When he to perfect age shonld come,
Three hundred younds a year.

And to his little daughter Jane,
Six hundred pounds in gold,
To be paid on the marriage-day,
Which might not be contrould.
But if these children chanc'd to die,
Ere they to age did come,
Their uncle should possess their wealth,
For so the will did run.



NOW, ponder well, ye pare us dear,
These words which I sha'll write:
A doleful story you shall hear,
In time brought forth to light.
A gentleman of good account
In Norfolk dwelt of late,
Who did in honour far surmount
Most men of his estate.

Sore sick he was, and like to die,
No help his life could save,
His wife by him as sick did lie,
And both possest one grave.
No love between these two was lost,
Each was to the other-kind,
In love they liv'd, in love they died,
And left two babes behind.

The one a fine and pretty boy,
Not passing five years old;
The other a girl more young than he,
And fram'd in beauty's mould.

Now, brother, said the dying-man,
Look to my children dear,
Be kind unto my boy and girl,
No friend else have they here,
To God and you I recommend
My children dear this day;
But little time we have, 'tis sure,
Within this world to stay.

You must be father and mother both,
And uncle all in one:
God knows what will become of them
When we are dead and gone.
And thus bespake the mother dear,
Oh! brother kind, quoth she,
You are the man must bring our babes
To wealth or misery.

And if you keep them carefully,
Then God will you reward;
But if you otherwife shoule deal,
God will your deeds regard.
With lips as cold as any stome,
They kis'd their children small;
God bless you both, our children dear.
Then down the tears did fall.

These speeches then the brother spake
To this sick couple there:
The keeping of your children small,
Dear sister, do not fear.
God never prosper me nor mine,
Nor ought else that I have,
If I do wrong your children dear,
When you are laid in grave.

The parents being dead and gone,
The children home he takes,
And brings them strait into his houle,
Where much of them he makes.
He had not kept these pretty babes
A twelvemonth and a day,
But for their wealth he did devise
To take their lives away.



He bargain'd with two ruffians strong,
Who were of furious mood,
That they should take these children
And slay them in a wood.
Then told his wife and all he had,
He did the children send,
For to be brought up in fair London,
With one that was his friend.

Away then went these pretty babes,
Rejoicing at that tide,
Rejoicing with a merry mood,
They should on horseback ride.
They prate and prattle pleasantly,
As they rode on the way,
To thole that should their butchers be,
And work their lives decay.

So that the pretty spech they made,
Made murderers' hearts relent,

And they who undertook the deed,
Still sorely did repent.
Yet one of them, most hard of heart,
Did vow to do his charge,
Because the wretch that hir'd him,
Had paid him very large.

The other won't hereto agree,
So here they sell to strife,
And then together they did fight
About the children's life.
And he that was of mildest mood
Did slay the other there,
Within an unfrequented wood,
While babes did quake for fear.



Thus wander'd these two pretty babes,
Till death did end their grieves,
In one another's arms they died,
As babes wanting relief.
No burial these pretty babes
Of any man receives,
Till Robin-red-breasts painfully
Did cover them with leaves.

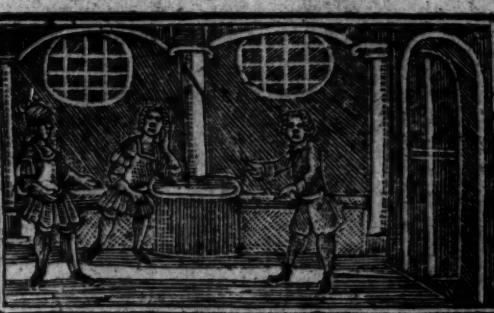
And now the heavy wrath of God
Upon their uncle fell,
Yea friendful fiends did haunt his houle:
His conscience felt an Hell.
His barns were fir'd, his house consum'd,
His lands were barren made,
His cattle died within the field,
And nothing with him stay'd.

And in a voyage to Portugal
Two of his sons did die,
And to conclude himself was brought
To want and misery.
He pawn'd and mortgaged his land
Ere seven years were out,
So now at length this wicked deed
By this means was found out.

The fellow that did take in hand
The children for to kill,
Was for a murder judg'd to die,
As was God's blest will.
He did confess the very truth
The which is here exprest.
Their uncle died when he for debt
Did long in prison seft.
You that executors be made,
And overseers eke,



These pretty babes went hand in hand,
And wander'd up and down;
But never more did see the man
Approaching from the town.
Their pretty lips with blackberries
Were all besmear'd and dy'd,
And when they saw the darksome night
They sat them down and cry'd.



Of children that be fatherless,
And infants mild and meek,
Take you example by this thing,
And yield to each his right,
Lest God for such-like cruelty,
Your wicked minds requite.

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